

# Economic Club hands speaker series to LMC

By HP STAFF

**BENTON TOWNSHIP** — Talk isn't cheap, and the rising cost of booking noted leaders and personalities, along with other factors, has led the Economic Club of Southwest Michigan to turn over its long-standing speaker series to Lake Michigan College.

“National demand for speakers has grown in the past decade. This has caused booking costs to

escalate dramatically. The amount we paid in 2008 for six top-tier personalities now pays for two,” Economic Club President Mike Cook said in a news release. “Additionally, the Club had to pay for facility rentals, marketing support, and other services, all while depending on volunteer help to run the organization.”

The Economic Club has sponsored the speaker series for 73 years, hosting more than 430 world

leaders, politicians and other newsmakers, with the Mendel Center as its venue since 1983.

The changing financial landscape, coupled with Cook's plan to retire after 34 years of volunteer service as president, led Econ Club leaders to seek a long-term solution. As a result, the club and LMC agreed to integrate the speaker series into The Mendel Center's annual programming and to transfer its assets

to the Lake Michigan College Foundation, which will hold the assets and donor pledges for exclusive support of speaker series operations.

Mendel Center Executive Director Mike Nadolski is the newly appointed director of The Economic Club of Southwestern Michigan Speakers series. Nadolski, who presents The Mendel Center Mainstage annual

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performance series, will take over speaker selection, donor relations and overall series management.

According to LMC President Bob Harrison, blending the speaker series into Mendel Center services aligns well with the college's strategic mission as an institution of higher learning.

Cook and Nadolski stressed that during the transition, Econ Club members will continue to enjoy an experience similar to what they have come to expect as well as some new opportunities and member benefits.

The two organizations increased their collaboration this season by moving member ticketing services to The Mendel Center box office. The Mendel Center helped the Econ Club introduce individual meeting ticket sales and flexible Grand Upton Hall memberships with or without the traditional dinner package option. Individual tickets will continue to be available for the next season.

Nadolski further explained that the speaker series will present exciting experiences for LMC students, faculty and staff.

"Support from individual donors and the business community will play a ma-

lor role in further strengthening the viability of the speaker series as we move forward," Nadolski said. "The world-class stage this series puts our region on is recognized as a valuable economic development and recruitment tool by area companies."

The Mendel Center plans to announce the 2017-18 lineup of four or five speakers late this summer. Grand Upton Hall and Mainstage memberships will continue to be available, with current members having the first opportunity to buy memberships. Club members will enjoy new benefits and services, the first of which will be automatic access to Mainstage series member benefits of ticket purchasing priority and performance discounts.

The Economic Club of Southwestern Michigan returns from winter hiatus March 22 when it welcomes retired NASA astronaut Captain Scott Kelly. Michio Kaku, world-renowned physicist, futurist and best-selling author, will address the Club on April 20.

Closing out the season will be journalist Anderson Cooper on May 17.

Individual meeting tickets are available for these events through The Mendel Center box office at 927-8700 or online at <http://bit.ly/2lqwSVl>.